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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 221605Z DEC 78
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8805
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO IMMEDIATE
USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 906
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ROME FOR VATICAN

E.O. 12065: XDS-1 12-2208 (CASTRO, RAUL) OR-M
TAGS: PBOR AR CI
SUBJ: GOA WARMLY EMBRACES PAPAL MOVE AND PLANS TROOP WITHDRAWAL

1. I MET WITH ARMY COMMANDER GENERAL VIOLA AT 6 PM
DECEMBER 21. AFTER I CONVEYED THE CONTENTS OF STATE 321148
TO HIM, HE TOLD ME THAT HE HAD JUST RECEIVED NOTIFICATION
THAT THE POPE HAD OFFERED TO SEND A SPECIAL ENVOY TO
SANTIAGO AND BUENOS AIRES. THE GOA WAS PLEASED WITH THE
PAPAL INITIATIVE, VIOLA STATED. HE SAID THE GOA KNEW THE
USG WAS BEHIND THE PAPAL MOVE AND WAS WARMLY GRATEFUL.

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AS SOON AS CHILE ACKNOWLEDGED ITS INTENT TO RECEIVE THE
PAPAL EMISSARY, THE GOA WOULD START WITHDRAWING TROOPS
FROM THEIR PRESENT POSITIONS IN AND NEAR THE ZONE OF
DISPUTE. CHILE WOULD BE EXPECTED TO DO LIKEWISE TO
HELP RELIEVE TENSIONS FURTHER.

2. THE PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE SPOKESMAN ANNOUNCED MORNING
DECEMBER 22 THAT THE GOA HAD ACCEPTED THE POPE'S OFFER.
(AS OF MID-MORNING DECEMBER 22, HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL
SOME CONFUSION/WITHIN GOA AS TO WHETHER THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT HAS
OFFICIALLY ACCEPTED.)

3. AT 11 AM. DECEMBER 22 IM MET WITH NAVY COMMANDER ADMIRAL
LAMBRUSCHINI, WHO INVITED ME IN TO THANK THE USG FOR
ITS EFFORTS TO AVOID AN ARMED CONFLICT BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND
CHILE AND TO HELP THE TWO COUNTRIES REACH A PEACEFUL
SETTLEMENT OF THE DISPUTE. AS A RESULT OF THE POPE'S
INITIATIVE, HE SAID HE WAS PULLING BACK AT LEAST PART
OF THE NAVAL FORCE WHICH WAS NOW IN SOUTHERN WATERS.
HE SAID THAT THE PAPAL DECISION HAD BEEN RECEIVED IN THE
NICK OF TIME.

4. AT THE SAME TIME AS MY TALK WITH LAMBRUSCHINI, HIS

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~~IPS by _____ obtained _____ not obt.
Date 12-2-78~~

Declassified Case: 17X- 57067 Date: 06-05-2013

POLITICAL AIDE ADM. LUCHETTA TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT POPE'S DECISION HAD ENABLED THE GOA TO CALL OFF ITS MILITARY OPERATIONS JUST A FEW HOURS BEFORE THEY WERE SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE. LUCHETTA SHOWED EMBOFF A NAVY RADIOGRAM CLASSIFIED "SECRET" SENT TONNAVAL UNITS AT 1905 HOURS DECEMBER. 21 STATING THAT BECAUSE OF THE PAPAL INITIATIVE FLEET OPERATIONS, CODENAMED "ACTO SOBERANIA" (ACT OF SOVEREIGNTY), WERE SUSPENDED.

5. THIRD CORPS COMMANDER MENENDEZ -- ONE OF THE MORE
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NOTORIOUS HARDLINERS -- WAS QUOTED BY THE PRESS THIS MORNING IN CONNECTION WITH THE PAPAL ENVOY DEVELOPMENT THAT "PEACE IS THE HOPE OF EVERY CIVILIZED MAN -- AND ESPECIALLY OF ARGENTINA." HE WENT ON TO UNDERLINE THAT PEACE SHOULD BE MADE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BUT THAT ONLY THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR NEGOTIATING A SETTLEMENT WITH CHILE.

6. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN A DRAMATIC TURNAROUND HERE IN GOA ATTITUDES AS A RESULT OF THE PAPAL INITIATIVE. THE BASIC PROBLEM IS NOT RESOLVED, OF COURSE, BUT GREAT HOPE IS BEING PLACED IN THE VATICAN'S ABILITY TO BREAK THE STALEMATE BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES. IN THE MEANTIME GOA'S BELLICOSE POSITION HAS SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED. IN VIEW OF THE ABUNDANCE OF FAVORABLE SIGNS FROM ARGENTINE MILITARY CHIEFS -- INCLUDING HARDLINERS LIKE MENDENEZ AND LAMBRUSCHINI -- WE HOPE THAT CHILE'S ACTION AT THE OAS (REPORTED IN ONE LEADING DAILY THIS MORNING) TO INVOKE ARTICLE SIX OF THE RIO TREATY AND ARTICLE 28 OF THE OAS CHARTER CAN BE QUICKLY SIDELINED SO AS NOT TO BECOME A NEW IRRITANT BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES.
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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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HA-05 SY-05 MCT-01 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3849
INFO AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 5158

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E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS SHUM, AR
SUBJECT MOTHERS GROUP DISAPPEARANCES : "MONTONERO" DOCUMENT
BECOMING INOPERATIVE

REF: BUENOS AIRES 9715

1. WE SEE EVIDENCE THAT THE "MONTONERO PLOY"
DESCRIBED REPTTEL IS TO BE TREATED NOW BY GOA AS AN
"INOPERATIVE" EXPLANATION OF THE FRENCH NUNS'
DISAPPEARANCE.

2. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ON TUESDAY (12/20) THE
PAPAL NUNCIO RECEIVED A FORMAL REPLY FROM THE
PRESIDENTS OFFICE TO THE NUNCIO'S EARLIER INQUIRY
REGARDING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE MISSING NUNS. THE
HAND DELIVERED RESPONSE (WE WERE NOT TOLD WHO SIGNED
) , REITERATED THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERN REGARDING
THE NUNS DISAPPEARANCE AND PROMISED THAT EFFORTS

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WERE UNDER WAY TO LOCATE THEM. NO MENTION WAS MADE OF
MONTONERO INVOLVEMENT, THOUGH THE LETTER WAS DELIVERED THREE
DAYS AFTER THE FIRST CORPS COMMUNIQUE.

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3. THE PAPAL NUNCIO, MSGR. PIO LAGHI, CALLED ON TUESDAY AFTERNOON ON FOREIGN MINISTER MONTES. THE NUNCIO, REPORTEDLY, GEGAN HIS CONVERSATION BY STRONGLY QUESTIONING THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE "MONTONERO" LETTER WHICH MONTES DID NOT REBUT. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING THE NUNCIO STATED THAT HE COULD NOT SEND A REPORT TO ROME, ASSERTING THAT THE MONTONEROS WERE HOLDING THE NUNS FOR RANSOM, BASED ON NEWS STORIES; HE HAD TO RECEIVE AN OFFICIAL COMMUNICATION REGARDING THAT EVEN FROM THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. ADMIRAL MONTES DID NOT AFFIRM HIS INTENTION TO SEND A NOTE.

4. WEDNESDAY'S (12/21) ARMY CONTROLLED DAILY LA OPINION FRONT PAGED A STORY THAT MINISTER OF THE INTERIOR HARGUINDEGUY HAD TOLD THE VISITING REPRESENTATIVE (A MR GADOT) OF MR EDGARD FAURE, PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH HOUSE OF DEPUTIES, THAT HE WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT THE KIDNAPPING OF THE FRENCH NUNS WOULD HAV A "HAPPY ENDING." AGAIN A HIGH OFFICIAL SEEMS TO HAVE DENIED HIMSELF AN OPPORTUNITY TO CITE MONTONERO INVOLVEMENT.

5. OTHER EMBASSY CONTACTS -- INCLUDING ESPECHE GIL AT THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTRY'S NORTH AMERICAN DESK AND RICARDO YOFRE, SENIOR CIVILIAN AT THE PRESIDENCY, HAVE SIMPLY CLAMMED UP WHEN WE RAISED THE RECENT ABDUCTIONS, RATHER THAN TAKING GOA OFF THE HOOK BY REPEATING THE FIRST GORPS' ALLEGATION.

6. MEANWHILE THE FRENCH EMBASSY HAS BEEN ACTIVE IN POINTING OUT A DISCREPANCY BETWEEN KIDNAPPED SISTER ALICIA'S LETTER AND THE MONONERO'S DOCUMENT, BOTH OF WHICH WERE DELIVERED TO AGENCE FRANCE PRESS ON DECEMBER 17. SISTER ALICIA'S

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LETTER STATES THAT SHE IS BEING HELD BY A DISSIDENT GROUP OF THE GOVERNMENT -- "UNGROUPE DISCIDENT AU GOUVERNEMENT ACTUEL". EMBASSY OFFICIALS POINT OUT THAT THIS IS NOT A DEFINITION THAT WOULD PRECISELY FIT THE MONTONEROS. IN ADDITION, THE SYNTAX OF THE FRENCH AND THE SUBSEQUENT USE OF THE WORD "AQUI" ALONGSIDE THE FRENCH WORD "ICI" INDICATE TO FRENCH EMBASSY OFFICIALS THAT THE SISTER TRANSLATED THE LETTER INTO FRENCH FROM A SPANISH ORIGINAL.

7. COMMENT: WE ARE ENCOURAGED THAT THE CONSIDERED REACTION HERE BY THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN TO IGNORE THE "MONTONERO" LETTER. IF BY TACIT UNDERSTANDING THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUE TO REGARD THE MONTONERO LETTER AS "INOPERATIVE", IT WILL ENHANCE THE CHANCES OF LOCATING AND RELEASING OF THE DISAPPEARED NUNS AND SUPPORTERS OF THE

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